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# THE REDUCTION OF ABSENCES AND LATENESS IN INDUSTRY

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It is, perhaps, heresy to quarrel with an old adage. In line, however, with a current bit of philosophy that it is as expedient to be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, this paper will take issue not with one old adage, but with two. There is a proverb that to be absent makes one conspicuous. Another holds that the absent are always guilty. We wish to take the ground, that neither of these is of necessity true. As it is an economic axiom that no progress can be made until there is a definition of terms, it is necessary, before going further, to understand that "the absent" under discussion are the industrial absent. And by "the industrial absent" are meant—Jones, the machinist, who does not come to work on Monday morning and Smith who loses half a day on Wednesday. By absence we do *not* mean labor turnover or unemployment. Absence is unquestionably a factor in labor turnover, but for our purpose the terms are by no means synonyms. Turnover is the broader term.

It is said that a man's, or firm's, pocketbook is a vital organ. It would seem then that anything connected with the apportionment or outlay of the purse's contents would be known to its owner. But there are practically no figures obtainable on the exact cost of industrial absences. Moreover, as one firm admits, most estimates in this connection are not estimates at all; they are simply wild guesses. Closer estimates, however, may be made in an indirect way. For instance the L. Bamberger Company of Newark estimates that they have to employ 5 per cent more people than is absolutely necessary because of the factor of absence. The Dennison Manufacturing Company figures the average wage loss to be forty-two cents a week to each female factory worker, and forty-nine cents a week to each male factory worker, these figures based on the average weekly wage being paid at the time the study was made. The total wage loss is \$50,000 a year. A concern in Detroit is spending \$50,000 a month

to prevent absences; and the firm considers the money is well spent. At one time, the Beacon Falls Rubber Shoe Company found that they could rely on only 60 per cent of their workers showing up for any one shift. The Curtis Publishing Company reports an average of forty-two cases of absence in every 1,000 employe session during the month of January, 1917. The Crompton-Knowles Loom Works finds an average absenteeism amounting to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. If these figures be multiplied by the 270,000 industrial concerns that there are in the United States the cost and the amount of absence looms tremendous.

That this amount of industrial absence is not conspicuous and is not, particularly, under the suspicious eye of the purse holder, is a curious fact. Only about one out of twelve concerns makes any effort to check up or remedy this condition.

In discussing the second heresy, namely, that the absent are not of necessity guilty, it is essential that investigation shall go into considerably greater detail than was the case with the first. In the first place what causes lie back of absences? In the second place, what various methods have been employed to overcome or combat absences?

In taking account of the reasons back of absences, it must be understood that those mentioned in no way constitute the complete list. It is a question whether or not a complete list could be obtained no matter how exhaustive an investigation might be made. Only those causes most evident and generally recognized will be discussed.

A prolific source of absence is latenesses. This may seem a paradox, yet the connection is a fairly obvious one. Here again exact figures cannot be quoted, but a few general examples will suffice to bring out the point. A great number of manufacturing plants adopt a policy of locking their gates at a certain time in the morning or afternoon, and keeping them locked until that particular work-period is over. The Cleveland Metal Products Company, for instance, after 7:15 in the morning is closed to the employe until noon. The Fore River Ship Building Company closes its plant to the straggler after 7:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. The General Electric Company at Lynn follows this same idea, as do many of the large textile mills at Lowell.

The first cause of lateness is poor transportation. This is

particularly true for those people who live outside the city and come in for their work. For example, one employe of the Lanston Monotype Company in Philadelphia owns a farm in New Jersey. The transportation facilities are such that he has to get to the factory either a whole hour before the plant is scheduled to start, or come in fifteen or twenty minutes after it has started. He generally chooses the latter. The foreman or executive, of course, has the right to tell him he must get there on time or not come at all and to do it without looking up the actual conditions and attempting some adjustment fair to both the man and the firm. This particular man has been with the company fifteen years, and to give up his farm in New Jersey would be a severe financial blow to him. Such problems are very frequent, under the present haphazard system the individuality of the person in question too often is the deciding factor in meeting issues of this sort. Transportation tie-ups within the city or town are too common to need any further discussion.

Another obvious factor is the weather. Any school teacher is familiar with the increased tardiness on dark winter mornings. In a class of sophomores at one of our large universities, on a dark morning in February, eleven out of thirty were five minutes late. The Curtis Publishing Company finds the same is true of its working force.

The "habit of lateness" is another big factor. In our childhood days we all probably heard of the ten o'clock scholar, and we find him in business as well as in school. One executive has said that nearly 90 per cent of all lateness is simply "habit." Possibly that figure is exaggerated. But the habit is all too prevalent at best.

The actual location of the time clock should be considered in its relation to lateness. "When is an employe late?" Must he be at his post, or simply in the factory is a question which an employer should have in mind before he locates his time clock. Sometimes the clock is placed in the department, sometimes at the main entrance. For example, at John Wanamaker's Philadelphia store a girl rings up at the time clock which is nearest to her department, but she is supposed to be at her place when the store opens.

A great many of the causes of lateness are identical with the causes of absence and may be considered under that heading. A most important excuse for absence is sickness. Thus the L. Bam-

berger Company find that out of a total daily absence of .052 per cent, .033 per cent is due to sickness. The Edison Electrical Company of Boston places it at 2.5 per cent of all their absences, while the Hood Rubber Company places it as high as 60 per cent. Of course, "sickness" is a term which covers a multitude of sins. Some of it is not very serious, and some of it is entirely assumed. One firm has called it a "lack of gameness," a giving in to the slightest indispositions. It forms the handiest excuse, if an excuse is needed. Of actual handicapping sickness, however, there is enough to warrant consideration. The two most prevalent diseases are alcoholism and stomach trouble. In alcoholism, the location of the saloon has a direct bearing on this particular problem. There is a town in southern Connecticut which has fourteen saloons within three blocks of its busiest manufacturing plants, and within easy reach of a great many homes of the men who work in the plants. A mining town in Pennsylvania has saloons as near the shafts of the mine as the company will permit. "Stomach trouble" covers a multitude of ills, aches and pains.

With sickness is the whole gamut of industrial accidents. These, too, form a common cause of absence. The United States Steel Corporation found that over a period of six years with three hundred days counted to the average year, and in a plant employing 6,600 men, the amount of days lost per worker was 6.2 per cent in the steel works where the accident rate is high, and 2.4 per cent per man in the yards where the accident rate is relatively low.

The time of year affects absences. It has been found that school attendance is best during autumn and spring; that in the New York schools the largest number of absences occur in January; and the next largest number occur in June. Unfortunately no figures have been collected to show the results of this influence on industrial concerns.

The day of the week unquestionably has a place. "Blue Monday" has a very real ring from the manufacturer's viewpoint. The Dennison Manufacturing Company finds its largest percentage of absences on Monday. The Fore River Ship Building Company, over a period of two months, finds a consistent average of 10 per cent of absenteeism on this day, with, oddly enough, Thursday morning as a close second with 7 per cent. The Cleveland Metal Products Company has epitomized its situation as the "Monday

habit." The causes of Monday's prominence are legion. A great majority of executives seem to feel that much of the Monday absence is entirely voluntary and could be avoided. The common practice of paying on Saturday might be a factor in this question, for with his pay in his pocket and a day and a half off, there is nothing to keep Jack a dull boy—until Monday morning. Almost any pay-day will breed a certain amount of absence. Some firms have discontinued the Saturday pay-day.

The time of day also enters in. The Hood Rubber Company reports a 10 per cent absenteeism from the night shift as against 8 per cent from the day shifts.

The days after holidays come in for their quota of blame. The Fore River Ship Building Company quotes an increase of 3 per cent after a holiday. In a large university, out of a class of thirty-eight, only seven reported at the first meeting of the class on the day college reopened. Dr. Ellsworth Huntington, in a study of a Cuban cigar factory, says that the Cubans have a great aversion to working on Monday, the day after their very real and strenuous Sunday holiday. Only a small portion of the force appears; those that do come arrive late, and get only 80 per cent as much done as on other days.

Let us consider next some of those things which have more to do with the workers personally. The sex of the worker makes a difference. Nearly every concern which employs both men and women, such as, for example, the Esterbrook Pen Company, and the Campbell Soup Company, finds that, not only is there a higher turnover among the women than among the men, but also that the percentage of absence is greater in the case of the women. The A. M. Collins Manufacturing Company carries out a premium scheme *only* in the case of its women employes, because it was among them that the greatest amount of lateness and absence existed. The Dennison Manufacturing Company has been the best source of information on this point. They have found in the factory departments an absentee record of 5.2 per cent among the women, 3.5 per cent among the men; in the factory clerical departments the percentages were just alike; but in the clerical sales division, again, the women showed 2.6 per cent as opposed to 1.1 per cent for the men. In the office force there was thus no difference, while in the factory department the difference was striking. In

general, tardiness among women employes probably rests upon two main elements, physical limitations and home responsibilities. Many girls try to carry on a home job and a shop job at the same time, and it is perhaps a safe assumption that both jobs suffer.

The type of wage payment is another factor. Does the piece worker, because he can hurry and make up lost time, and because his time is in a sense his own, take a day off with an easier conscience and under less provocation than the day worker? Certainly it is open to argument.

Together with this question of wages, we must also consider raises in salary. Some men have said increasing pay means decreasing attendance, and others have taken the opposite view. The Fisk Rubber Company says that some of its men, who make eight dollars a day, argue that they can make enough in five days. The Cleveland Metal Products Company assumes that present high wages lead to a greater use of intoxicants and consequently to more frequent "lay-offs." On the other hand, these last few years have witnessed all kinds of bonus systems, profit-sharing schemes and blanket raisers. It is by far too big a problem to warrant any positive statements.

A rather nebulous factor in absence is an indefinite thing which we might label as the discontent of the worker. This discontent may arise from conditions outside the factory, such as lack of recreation in the locality, or from conditions within the factory, such as dislike of his particular job or friction with his foreman or with the men of his shift. It is almost impossible to measure or to trace the definite influence of an element of discontent, but it must be mentioned in passing, for it unquestionably has a definite effect.

The industrial situation and the condition of the labor market play a very important rôle in latenesses and absences. The Crompton-Knowles Company accounts for nearly all its absences on the ground of abundant work. In addition to the ease of obtaining a new job, the present high wages make the financial loss of an idle day or two a matter of no account. The Cleveland Metal Products Company finds that there has been a decided increase in the number of absences during the past year, and they attribute them to this cause. Tardiness has also increased in this firm, running a little less than 1 per cent of their entire force. The Joseph and Feiss Company show an increase in absence of 2.5 per cent per day in 1916

against 1.5 per cent per day in 1915, a change which they attribute to the present condition of the labor market. In a large shoe company in Philadelphia conspicuous signs are posted calling attention to the rules regarding absences and lateness, but one of the executives admits that in the past two years they have made no effort to enforce them.

As a last cause for absence we place the weather. It is perhaps because this reason is so obvious, that no one has ever taken the trouble to analyze it carefully. Probably the best work that has been done in this connection is a study of school children in New York City and in Denver, Colorado, made by E. J. Dexter. There is a great difference between the ten-year old school boy and the thirty-year old machinist, and yet these results might have some comparative value. It was found that on cloudy days attendance was not so good as on bright days. Fifteen per cent of all absences occurred at a time when the temperature was lowest, and the next largest group occurred when the thermometer registered above ninety degrees. The number of absences increased when the humidity was high, a thing not so hard to account for, high humidity almost invariably causing rain. Oddly enough the attendance of the boys seemed to be more directly affected by the weather than that of the girls.

There are other causes of absence for which firms are themselves directly responsible. Such things as a fluctuating work schedule and shutting down for inventory quite naturally make for an increased absentee record. The workman pays for this in time lost. But absences of this nature breed labor turnover, and for labor turnover the companies pay. Possibly the accounts balance.

So far we have been dealing with causes. Remedies must follow and of these there are two kinds: alleviation and prevention. Either or both must be sought and tested to fit individual and localized needs.

We have said that one of the causes of absence is lateness. If therefore we do away with lateness, *ipso facto* we may cut down absence. The "habit of lateness" is different. A student in a large lecture course in one of our universities came to class five minutes late eleven times in succession. Nearly all latenesses occur within the first half hour; 95 per cent is the estimate of the Midvale Steel Company, and the bulk of this 95 per cent is within the first ten



minutes. To combat this condition, this company levies a small fine on latenesses that occur within the opening half hour. The University student may be given half cuts. For an office force, it is said that a time clock is a great incentive to develop the habit of being on time—although a time clock is irritating to nearly all office men. Often a timely warning will serve to check the habit. An executive of a scientifically managed concern, found that one of his stenographers had the habit of being a little late. One day she failed to appear at all and he advertised for another stenographer. It so happened that she had a legitimate excuse for this particular absence; but when her lateness record was shown her she had no excuse to offer. She asked, however, for another chance, and during a period of three months since that time she has not been late once. The habit, however, is not always so readily and willingly broken.

The question of docking for lateness is much the same as the question of general docking for absence. There are, however, one or two systems which apply more particularly to lateness alone. Thus for example in the Cleveland Metal Products Company, for any fraction of time under fifteen minutes, a man is recorded as, and docked for, the full fifteen minutes. The Leeds and Northrop Company have a five and ten minute plan. If a man is late five minutes he is docked half an hour, ten minutes a full hour, etc. Schemes of this sort meet with varying success. A device which brings very real results is one which makes lateness difficult. If a man arrives late at the gate of the Fore River Ship Building Company and feels that he has an excuse, his case has first to be referred to the chief time keeper who in turn refers it to the foreman. If the foreman is willing, the man is admitted. It is found that the majority of men will make a special effort to be on time, rather than have to go through such a process. At Strawbridge and Clothier's store in Philadelphia those who are late must go to a central desk and sign a slip, with the result that latenesses are only about 2.5 per cent as against a former record of from 5 to 10 per cent. The J. B. Stetson Company requires a pass to be obtained before the tardy operative is allowed to enter his department. These passes are then filed and kept for future reference. At the plant of the Plimpton Press the "lates" report to the employment department. Then they fill out a "late" ticket giving the operative's name, his

number and the reason for his tardiness. Combined with this, is a sort of docking system also. If the employe is excused he is paid from the time he reports to his work place; if he is unexcused for any time before 8:30, he is given an 8:30 ticket and loses all time previous to that hour. The average per cent of lateness per working day in this plant is now only 2.47 per cent.

A variety of other devices of a similar nature are employed all with the same end in view, namely, to put a premium on coming in on time, by making it financially or conspicuously troublesome to come in late.

Docking is a device with which we are all familiar. To the piece worker docking is, perhaps, not serious for it is possible for him to make up the money loss by extra effort. The day worker does not have this opportunity. The Midvale Steel Company has a very definite system of fines for all sorts of minor offences. At the Curtis Publishing Company's plant any unexcused lateness is fined at the rate of time and half time salary rate. The German American Button Company levies a small fine for lateness, the proceeds from which are placed in an employes' trust fund for the financial support of general employes' activities. There seems to be a growing feeling against fining systems. Any such system becomes dangerous unless the employes know where the money from such fines goes. Moreover, a fining system is not usually adequate, for many employes will pay the fine feeling that in so doing, all responsibility on their part ceases.

The careful records of lateness and absence which are kept in any up-to-date employment department serve as an indirect fining system, since a man's record is a factor in determining whether he shall receive a raise for which he has applied. Thus, in combating lateness and absence, the A. M. Collins Manufacturing Company feels it is fundamental that the employes shall realize that those in charge know how often they are late and how often they stay out all day. To this end the firm prepared a card which shows the total possible number of hours for any one person to work, making allowance for holidays, shut-downs and things of a similar nature. The employes' record is kept on this card and it shows at a glance the comparison between the actual hours which he has worked and those which he might have worked. These cards are kept with other in-

formation and often form the basis for salary raises or for promotion, or supply the grounds on which either may be refused.

It has been said that one of the main weaknesses of our municipal governments is that no one is responsible. Centering responsibility for civil evils tends to remove those evils. This is perhaps true likewise of industry in general and of our problem in particular. The one exception to this has been the case where the responsibility has been centered on the foreman alone. That is not an altogether fair statement either, for the problem of absences is only one of the many that a foreman has to solve. We have seen how keeping records is one way of centering responsibility and it is possible to have a concentration of responsibility for lateness and absence. In this connection the Crompton-Knowles Company believes that continued pressure from high authority is the best way of keeping absences down to a minimum. The absences are reviewed by the general superintendent, and by the works superintendent who in turn take them up with the department foreman. In this way the number of absentees has been reduced 30 per cent within the last six months. The Dennison Manufacturing Company on the other hand has given up the idea of concentrating the responsibility on the foreman alone. One of the most efficient methods is the posting of comparative bulletins. The Crompton-Knowles Company compiles a monthly report of its absentees, and it is the desire of the foremen to make a good report that stimulates them to give this problem its due attention.

In 1913, the Curtis Publishing Company began posting bulletins showing latenesses by division, and the standing of each division in reference to the others. Just recently absences have been added to this bulletin. From 1913 to 1915 latenesses were cut down from thirteen per one thousand to nine. Borrowing this idea of stimulating rivalry between the departments, Strawbridge and Clothier worked out a similar scheme. At first the bulletins were not issued but were simply sent to the department heads, and this system alone cut latenesses in half. The Lanston Monotype Company also posts a comparative bulletin, with the result that their absence record, while never very high, now runs less than 2 per cent.

In the Bridgeport plant of the International Silver Company, rivalry is stimulated among the various departments, by posting the record of their service reward by departments. Within each de-

partment itself a bulletin is posted showing the percentage of people earning service rewards in that department. To the department which makes the best record in a given week, a banner is awarded. This seems to have brought results. The man who loses his service reward is laughed at by his comrades, and continued absenteeism threatens his popularity. The success of any such plan will depend very largely on the way the banner is presented.

This centering of responsibility has so far been very largely in the department. In order to improve its operation, Strawbridge and Clothier adopted a plan of posting the names of those who were late more than twice in the same week, with the result that the ratio was still further cut. The Dennison Manufacturing Company sent out a series of absence slips to each department. On these slips are entered all absences, whether excused or unexcused. The slips are so arranged that no broken time can appear on an employe's clock card without an absence slip explaining this loss. The object was to make sure that all lost time was reported. With this record, tabulated each month, individual cases are taken up with the employment department. If a loss is due to an operative's home duties she is asked to correct it, or else to give up her position. This centering of responsibility by the posting of bulletins is an interesting commentary on the power of publicity.

Thus far, there has been no quarrel with the adage that the absent are always guilty. In a sense this is correct, for all these systems are based on the philosophy that the absent are guilty—guilty in the sense that absence is an individual matter over which a concern has no control. Herein lies the point of difference, for there is a control that can be and should be exercised by the employer. An ounce of prevention is said to be worth a pound of cure. We have just been discussing the pound of cure. The ounce of prevention is rather a new departure.

One of the first plans which has been put into practice has been the rewarding of punctuality and regularity by means of bonuses. These may take several forms. Some are purely cash, some are cash plus the added incentive of a vacation, some are simply tokens of one sort or another.

The Beacon Falls Rubber Shoe Company, in order to induce their force to be punctual and steady, adopted the scheme of paying a dollar a week bonus to any employe who turned in a perfect ticket

for a week. This had the result of reducing their absentee record by nearly thirty per cent. The Detroit Steel Casting Company gives a bonus of twenty-five cents for each working day during the payroll period. Thus if an employe works a thirteen-day period he receives a total bonus of \$3.25. This system has only been in use since July, 1916 and has not had time to prove itself. The company feels that it has done much to keep the men steadily at their jobs. At the Bridgeport plant of the International Silver Company they have instituted a service reward scheme, whereby the company pays 5 per cent of a man's weekly salary if he is neither absent nor late during the week. This service reward is paid four weeks after it is earned, providing of course the man is still in their employ. At the outset only 69 per cent of the force qualified for this bonus. At the present about 81 per cent qualify and the percentage of absence and lateness has been cut from 46 per cent to 33 per cent. It is perhaps well to bear in mind, in this connection, that labor conditions in Bridgeport have been about as acute as in any city in the Union. The bonuses mentioned so far have simply been cash payments.

Some concerns go even further. The A. M. Collins Manufacturing Company, for example, decided upon a premium of a week's vacation with full pay to every woman employe who during the year had not lost more than ten full days. The Saturday half day is counted as a full day. Absence is excused in cases of sickness if a doctor's certificate is presented. The company feels that while all the employes should have a vacation, the results are much more beneficial when the employe knows that the time he is losing is not costing him money. Forty per cent of the employes of this concern now receive a vacation with pay. The Leeds and Northrup Company give a bonus of a quarter of an hour extra each day, *i.e.*, an hour and a half a week to those employes who are on time every day. They also have a vacation plan, based on service. Any person who has worked with the company five years is entitled to a day's holiday with pay for each year he has been with the company. Thus a seven-year man will get a seven-day vacation with pay any time he chooses between May and September. The foremen and office force are allowed to take their vacations—and in their cases these days are extra for in any case they receive a two weeks vacation with pay, at such times as they see fit, a day at a time. This of course gives them a feeling that they are on their own time and not asking any

favor of the company. Over 50 per cent of the present force has been with this firm five years.

The Curtis Publishing Company, as a recognition of satisfactory service, based on unusually good attendance or promptness, gives out each year a series of tokens as awards. This may take the form of the original of a painting reproduced in one of its publications, or a set of books. In 1915, 850 awards were given out. One hundred and fifty-six of the force were neither late nor absent. Five hundred and sixty-three employees were not late during the year, and 92 had a perfect attendance record. Twenty employees of this concern have been neither late nor absent for five years. The Kerite Cable Company gives turkeys to many of its employees each Christmas.

Several other concerns, while they have no bonus system at present, are contemplating the establishment of one in the near future. The Dennison Manufacturing Company is contemplating to pay a bonus for perfect attendance over a period of six weeks. They expect to pay this in a pay week in which a holiday occurs, which would virtually give all hour workers a chance to pay themselves for each holiday simply by being present every working day. For this purpose the working year is divided into eight periods of about thirty-eight days each. The Hood Rubber Company also is considering giving a bonus, and many others have plans in the making.

Another factor, ranged on the preventive side, is that of home visiting. This method suggests both cure and prevention. It may be carried on as part of the work of the employment department, but is often done by firms which have no regular employment office. The first work of this sort was developed by the Ford Motor Company and was at first severely criticized, partly from the fact, as some one has pointed out, that this concern has the unfortunate habit of doing things first. But be that as it may, every morning the time department turns over to the investigating staff a list of absentees of the previous day. Each absentee is carefully looked up. The result has been that where formerly the daily absences totalled about 10 per cent, the number is now less than one half of 1 per cent.

The Cleveland Metal Products Company has found this system most satisfactory. They employ two nurses, one of whom stays in the dispensary while the other visits absentees. These

nurses are provided with automobiles in order that as much territory as possible may be covered. The visits of one nurse cut down absentees in this concern from 5 per cent to 3.5 per cent, and by employing two nurses the absenteeism in 1915 was only 1.9 per cent. The Bamberger Department Store visits the employe in cases of sickness. Hart, Schaffner and Marx follow out this same idea, working through their medical department, and have found that one visit from the nurse, is in almost all cases sufficient to reform the unnecessary delinquent.

By no means all of such plans meet with entire success. We quote a paragraph from a letter from the Fisk Rubber Company—

The system we had in effect was satisfactory enough, but the principle evidently was wrong as the percentage of absentees was not cut to any extent. Our plan of operation required two nurses, two automobiles, with the necessary chauffeurs, and three clerks with the necessary supervision. After a while the men became very clever with their excuses, and as a matter of fact there never was so much bowel trouble and headaches since the world began. To much time and money are consumed by the endeavor to visit all absentees. I think the proper way to handle this would be through a labor tracer, etc.”

The work of employment departments must not be overlooked as an element in the ounce of prevention. Many of these today carry on physical examinations which determine the physical status of a man before he ever takes a job, and then to maintain his fitness after he has come to work. The Joseph and Feiss Company maintain a physician, an oculist, and a dentist for these purposes.

Another feature of the operation of an employment department is the following up of the work of a man after he has taken a position. Thus the coupling of the right man to the right job relieves a great deal of that discontent which fosters so many industrial ills. Unfortunately it is not possible to measure discontent in figures; but it is obvious that a man contented with his job and surroundings is apt to work more steadily than one who is not.

We hear a great deal in these days about “safety first.” The application of this slogan to industry has meant the material cutting down of accidents, and this has meant the reduction of absences. For instance in two huge steel plants, of approximately the same size, plant A has used methods to prevent accidents, plant X has used none. In plant X, in the steel works, the number of days lost

per man over a period of three hundred working days is 16.9 per cent. In plant A this percentage is only 4.7 per cent. In the yards of plant X the average daily loss is 4.2 per cent, while in plant A it is just half that or 2.1 per cent. In this campaign of "safety first" the workmen's compensation act has been the largest single factor in the reduction of accidents.

The prevention of unnecessary fatigue has some bearing on our problem, as it avoids lateness and perhaps absence during the next working period. The Joseph and Feiss Company combats fatigue by a change of work at given periods. A certain machine company shuts off its machinery absolutely during a stipulated part of each day. But here again we simply have opinions and no figures.

The use of alcohol is an ever troublesome problem. Some firms refuse to employ a drinking man. In plants where there is night work and nearby saloons, it often becomes a serious problem to get the men to return to the shop on time when the work recommences, after the shut-down at midnight. To combat this condition the Philadelphia plant of the Barrett Company shuts down for only half an hour at midnight, this time being shortened at the other end. It then serves coffee to its employees free of charge. The result has been that of the seventy men who used to go out at this time, now only four leave the premises. It is possible that desirable lunch rooms within the factory would have the same effect.

Specific efforts to attack the problem of lateness and absence are things of such recent origin, that many of them seem of more theoretical than practical value. In attacking the problem, it is well to point out that it is not suggested that the personal liberties of any employe shall be interfered with. It is the avoidable and unnecessary absence and lateness that are the objects of attack. The difficulties of studying the general problem may be summed up in the following paragraph of a recent letter from a large silk mill. It is typical.

In reply to your request for information as to lateness and absence at this plant, we must state that while we are at present employing a time keeping system which adequately informs us as to these factors, we have not to date accumulated sufficient data to be of practical value to you in your present quest. If we could offer you our seasoned information a year from date, we should be glad to be of any possible assistance.



The nucleus of this and of many similar letters lies in the last sentence. With seasoned data, comes action, and from the present indications of this newer conception of the relations of employer and the employe, we take the liberty to assume that in this action, we shall find continued support for our second heresy, that the absent are not of necessity guilty and lessened evidence for our first, that the absent are not of necessity conspicuous.